

APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(W. D. ARMIT, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

SOLDIER settlers throughout the district have experienced various climatic conditions as outlined in my remarks on the settlement of Crown lands. Soldier settlement is fairly evenly distributed throughout the land district, and while a number were experiencing phenomenal rainfall, and in some cases floods, others were subject to drought conditions at the same period.

Production of butterfat dropped to a marked extent in areas around Auckland City and south of Auckland. The satisfactory return from pig-husbandry has generally been fully availed of by the settlers.

The administration of dairy-farming accounts continues to call for the closest co-operation between the Department and mortgagor. Wherever possible, assistance is given by way of pooling proceeds of Crown dairy orders with the settler's income and arranging budgetary expenditure to ensure a reasonable farm-working arrangement. In a number of cases it has been found desirable to handle the whole of the proceeds in this manner. Provided reasonable production is maintained, the Department is doing its best to meet the continued low standard of values by granting concessions of interest charged.

Wool-prices proved disappointing, and graziers have hardly been able to stand up to charges. The flock-farmer with an annual draft of sheep to sell has benefited by comparatively high sheep-prices, and management in this direction is a determining factor as to whether Crown charges can be wholly or partially met.

Dwellings reverting to the Crown are easily let, but few sales are recorded. The Department has continued to renovate and repair, with a view to maintenance of buildings. Advances to mortgagors with the same object in view have been made to a considerable extent. Suspension of principal payments and variation of mortgages have been arranged where the security permits. Where default exists, it is largely due to unemployment or greatly reduced earnings by mortgagors and tenants.

AUCKLAND.

(K. M. GRAHAM, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

This year has proved to be a difficult one for the great majority of soldier settlers.

As far as dairy-farmers are concerned, low prices for produce continued to rule, and payouts for butterfat have averaged about 9d. per pound. To make matters more difficult there was a prolonged drought about midsummer in all parts of the district, except the Bay of Plenty, which reduced production considerably.

Added to this, a number of settlers in the Waikato district were affected by serious peat fires, which destroyed a large area of pasture. Settlers who have concentrated on pigs as a side-line obtained satisfactory returns.

Sheep-farmers again suffered through a drop in the price realized for wool, the average price being only about half what was obtained in the previous year. Those, however, with fat lambs to dispose of did quite well at the prices ruling.

Most settlers, in spite of difficult times, have made an honest endeavour within their means to meet their liabilities to the Department, and the total received by the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account showed an increase on the previous year's receipts.

Many soldier settlers, owing to continued low prices of produce, have found it necessary to apply to the Land Board for relief, which has been afforded in many deserving cases by remission and postponement of charges and also by further advances to maintain and further improve properties. To off-set low prices many settlers have made an effort to increase production by herd testing and culling and by increasing their herds.

Unemployment and reduced incomes have also affected house mortgagors adversely, and in many cases relief has been given by arranging adjusted mortgages, thus reducing annual charges substantially.

GISBORNE.

(H. L. PRIMROSE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

As the majority of the soldier settlers in this district are engaged in dairy-farming their position has not greatly improved during the year. Those going in for sheep-farming, on the other hand, are showing an improved position, but there is still considerable doubt as to what the future holds for our wool and mutton.

The housing position has not improved greatly owing to the prevalent unemployment, but there are practically no houses on hand unoccupied, and every endeavour is being made to induce at least some payment, however small.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(F. R. BURNLEY, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Soldier settlers generally on both dairying and sheep properties have experienced a difficult period owing to a fall in the market price of the products, though a better tone appears to be operating at the later sales.